

Air Quality Guidance for Southwark Schools

Introduction

- Air pollution in much of London and part of Southwark, is above the legal average levels for Nitrogen Dioxide. This is mainly due to traffic emissions and emissions from buildings
- In Southwark, 45 primary schools and 10 secondary schools are affected by this
- Children are more vulnerable to poor air quality because they breathe faster and their lungs are still developing
- Poor air quality can cause permanent reduced lung capacity and respiratory weakness, but being fit and active reduces the health impacts for adults and children
- Schools can safeguard children with respiratory health conditions from effects of poor air quality by:
 - Ensuring pupils with asthma have their inhaler with them or nearby at all times
 - Holding a spare inhaler and having parental consent to administer to at risk pupils in an emergency
 - Checking pupils with long term lung conditions have a health care plan that considers arrangements when at school

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School air quality plans

School communities can create an air quality plan to improve air quality around the school and can protect pupils by helping them become healthier. Things to consider including are:

- Improve the **structure** of the school estate and its surroundings
- Encourage **active travel** and **exercise**
- Discourage **car use** and **parking** near the school
- Provide **education** that **raises awareness** of air quality, its impact and solutions, and encourage and reward staff, parent, carer and pupil **engagement** and **behaviour change**
- Sign up to an **air quality forecast or alert** system
- **Monitor** pupils with known respiratory conditions

Not all of the actions listed above will be necessary at every school. Successful improvements to the school community's health will result from taking actions that are suitable to your particular school.

Below are some actions and activities you could consider putting in an air quality plan for your school.

The structure of the school and its surroundings

- When renovating, doing building works or making changes, consider moving school entrances, relocating play areas and/or installing fences and barriers to reduce pupil exposure to busy roads
- Lobby for improvements to local roads and pavements around the school e.g. improved road layout, wider pavements, pedestrianisation or no parking at school entrances. Your local school travel plan officer can help assess suitable changes for your school. Contact gareth.tuffery@southwark.gov.uk
- Reduce on-site emissions from boilers, kitchens and any other sources. Southwark Council offers free sustainability audits to identify boiler, lighting and structural improvements. They can also give information on cheap fuel suppliers and much more. Contact paul.collison@southwark.gov.uk
- Reduce the schools energy needs with better insulation, glazing, dealing with cold spots, blocking draughts, fitting smart meters and room thermostats, turning the heating down, linking lights to movement detectors, install auto-off switches for computers and other appliances, etc.
- Install green planting such as barrier bushes along the school perimeter, put green walls and planters in external play areas. Schools can periodically apply for a 'Cleaner Greener Safer' Grant from the Council: follow this link [Cleaner, Greener, Safer](#) for more information
- If the location is suitable, hold half term or monthly 'play streets'. These temporary road closures remove cars and traffic from around the school and reclaim the street for play and physical activity. If your school is on a suitable road, the [London Play website](#) contains more information

- For deliveries, school transport and school trips request fuel efficient vehicles and order supplies from local sources where possible

Encourage active travel & exercise

- Achieve an accredited TfL STARs School Travel Plan to encourage active travel to school and change the travel patterns of parents, staff and pupils. Your STARs school travel plan officer is gary.douglas@southwark.gov.uk. More details can be found at <https://stars.tfl.gov.uk/>
- Transport for London offer cycle and scooter parking grants. These open in September each year and offer a range of different cycle and scooter parking options to fit your school. To be eligible you must have a STARs accreditation. Contact your local school travel plan officer gareth.tuffery@southwark.gov.uk for more information
- Hold a walking challenge using pedometers or introduce a 'walk to school' day once a week. For more walking initiatives see the [TfL STARs](#) website. Funding is available for some school walking initiatives. Contact your School Travel Plan Officer gary.douglas@southwark.gov.uk for more information
- If you have a cohort of pupils living in a specific area consider a Walking Bus. This is where there is an agreed meeting point for parents and children. They then all walk to school together. This is a great activity for parents to lead on and is sociable and healthy
- Ask Bike-ability to come to your school. You can book free cycle training for KS2 pupils to teach basic skills about riding a bike safely and eventually improve their proficiency on the roads. Go to [Cycle Confident](#) for more information
- Encourage cycling at your school through incentive schemes such as The Golden Lock or a Biker's Breakfast. Use the TfL STARs website to find out more ideas for cycling projects at <https://stars.tfl.gov.uk/>
- Encourage all the school community to download and use the City Air app <http://cityairapp.com/> or the Walk It app <https://walkit.com/>. They can then plan quieter, safer, less polluted walking routes for use both in and out of school

Discourage car use and car parking

- Have staff or engaged parents police the yellow zig-zags outside the school to prevent vehicles using the space to park. The zig zags are for road safety but keeping them clear helps with air quality. You can raise awareness about poor parking behaviour through newsletters and your website. The Highway Code states: "It is a highway obstruction offence to wait, park, or stop to set down or pick up passengers on school entrance markings." Parking on zig zags can also result in a parking ticket. If your school suffers from regular illegal

parking it might be possible to arrange for parking wardens or parking enforcement cameras to attend. Contact environmental.protection@southwark.gov.uk

- Encourage 'Park & Stride' by creating 5 to 10 minute Walking Zones, to show where parents can park safely well away from the school and walk their children in. This will reduce the poor air quality peaks found outside schools at the start and end of the day. You could use related lessons to get pupils to design and create walking maps showing safer, less polluted, low traffic routes from the parking areas to the school. This will minimise traffic congestion around the school so other traffic can flow more freely and cause less local pollution
- Put any low pollution walking routes to school designed in your school's welcome pack and on your website
- Install 'No engine idling' signs at popular parent and carer parking locations. Signs can be ordered from environmental.protection@southwark.gov.uk

Raise awareness through education

- Elect or have volunteer Junior Travel Ambassadors (Year 6). This small group of pupils can lead on active travel projects in school and can even run their own local air quality campaigns. Contact the road safety officer at vivienne.harris@southwark.gov.uk to find out about JTA training
- Introduce staff to the '[Cleaner Air for Schools' toolkit](#) teaching aid, and other air quality and environment related educational resources and teaching aids at [Educational resources for students and teachers](#)
- Appoint Air Quality Champions from the school community (staff, governors, parents & carers and pupils) to suggest and organise activities, campaigns, grant bids and fundraising, to drive forward your agreed air quality action plan initiatives
- Run campaigns to save energy in the school such as 'lights out' and 'equipment off when not in use', to report over-heating rooms, draughts and cold spots, etc.
- Create maps and noticeboards to highlight areas of poor air quality around the school, and highlight air quality improvement activities
- Use the school website to let visitors know how they can get to your school using public transport
- Incentivise behaviour change with competitions for staff, students and parents & carers to:
 - Walk, swim, or cycle the most in a week, based either on distance or on time spent exercising
 - Have classes or competitions to design campaign graphics & strap-lines for noticeboards, banners, posters, stickers and/or badges to go with any projects or actions you agree

Air quality forecasts & alerts and health monitoring

- Get your child health lead and parents and carers of pupils with respiratory conditions to sign up for Air Text air quality forecasts – Contact www.airtext.info/ or get the phone app
- Keep a database of all pupils and staff with respiratory conditions and have a system to let the teachers know if air pollution is forecast to be high
- Ensure inhalers are safely stored in class and all parental permissions are in place